

Opening Statement
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Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources
Committee on Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
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Hearing on “2006 DoD Counternarcotics Budget: Does It Deliver the Necessary Support?”

May 10, 2005

Mr. Chairman,

Thank you for holding today’s important hearing on the President’s FY 2006 budget request for counternarcotics programs within the Department of Defense.

Our nation’s military plays a vital role in many aspects of our nation’s drug control strategy.

In the area of supply reduction, the military provides essential support for interdiction and eradication efforts both internationally and domestically.

Much of the funding the Defense Department receives for counterdrug activities supports interdiction efforts aimed at keeping illicit drugs produced in Colombia and other Andean region nations from reaching the United States. Nearly all of the cocaine consumed in the United States and most of the heroin consumed on the East Coast originates in Colombia. Throughout the transit zone and at our borders, the military provides critical support to federal, state, and local law enforcement to help identify and stop drug traffickers, as well as possible terrorist threats.

Since the toppling of the Taliban regime in response to the 9/11 attacks, Afghanistan has become a major focus of U.S. interdiction and eradication efforts. Income derived from the illicit Afghan opium trade supported the Taliban and Al Qaeda prior to 9/11. Today, narco-terrorism, fueled by the Afghan opium trade, represents the single greatest threat to the stability and longevity of Afghanistan’s fledgling democracy. The military’s support of interdiction and eradication missions within Afghanistan and throughout Central Asia are key to our efforts to counteract the recent explosion in Afghan opium cultivation and production.

The military supports similar missions in every part of the world where drugs and narco-terrorism pose significant threats. But funding for Defense Department counterdrug activities also supports essential demand reduction programs to reduce drug use within the military and military communities, in addition to providing vital tactical, technical, and material support to domestic law enforcement and community prevention programs.

The President’s FY 2006 budget request proposes to devote \$896 million to counterdrug efforts within the Department of Defense. These efforts are centrally coordinated by the Office of Counternarcotics, with oversight from the Office of Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict.

Apart from examining the adequacy of the President’s proposed funding for DoD counterdrug programs, this hearing will address questions about the effectiveness of the Pentagon’s

counterdrug efforts and the extent to which the military recognizes and treats counternarcotics as a high-priority mission. Key questions include:

- Are resources being diverted from counterdrug efforts in the transit zone, resulting in reduced surveillance of drug trafficking targets bound for the United States?
- Should the military should assume a larger, more direct role in interdicting and eradicating opium in Afghanistan, or would this alienate the Afghan public and compromise counterterrorism missions that depend upon Afghan intelligence and cooperation?
- Is there tension between the counter-terrorism and counternarcotics missions or are they truly complementary?
- How do we measure the effectiveness of these programs in the context of a National Drug Control Strategy that states as its “singular goal” *reducing drug use* in the United States?

As you know Mr. Chairman, I have expressed deep concerns about the shift of emphasis within the President’s overall drug budget request.

The President has proposed deep cuts for demand reduction programs and programs that support drug enforcement at the state and local level. Safe and Drug Free Schools and the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program are glaring examples. Even within the President’s request for the Department of Defense, this trend appears, as the National Guard’s Drug Demand Reduction program is slated for a sharp cut.

Meanwhile, the President proposes substantial increases for international supply reduction efforts that, despite yielding record seizures and eradication estimates, have demonstrated no impact on the availability or price of drugs in the United States.

Mr. Chairman, the President’s 2005 National Drug Control Strategy emphasizes “balance” and states that program effectiveness will be the basis for drug budget funding decisions. Unfortunately, testimony from our previous hearings on the President’s drug budget have cast doubt on the credibility of both of those themes in the Strategy.

Today’s hearing offers an opportunity to examine another important area of the federal drug control budget and I thank you for your close attention to this subject.

Finally, let me say that, whatever our views on the President’s budget and the direction of the National Drug Control Strategy, we deeply appreciate the efforts and the sacrifice of the men and women of the U.S. armed forces. We are grateful for their devotion to the many missions they perform to keep America and its people safe.

I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses and I yield back my remaining time.

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